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FINLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KATRI VIINIKKA
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF
THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, Excellencies and dear colleagues,

I would like to congratulate you, H.E. Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki, on your election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties. Let me assure you of Finland's full support in addressing the tasks before us.

I would like to thank the Director-General for his statement and leadership, and the Technical Secretariat for their valuable work.

Finland fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I would, however, like to highlight a few topics of particular importance to Finland.

The current year is very special for Finland as we are celebrating a hundred years of independence. The theme of our centennial is "Together". Throughout our independence, we have supported and respected an international system that is based on jointly agreed rules and norms.

This year also marks another milestone as we are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Convention is a prime example of an international effort to address a mutual threat presented by weapons of mass destruction. The Convention is proof of what can be achieved when nations address challenges together.

This remarkable achievement of prohibiting an entire category of weapons of mass destruction is currently in jeopardy because of actions committed by a State Party, the Syrian Arab Republic. According to the seventh report of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) the Syrian Arab Republic is responsible for the release of sarin at Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017. The report also finds that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is responsible for the use of sulfur mustard on 15 and 16 September 2016 in Um-Housh. The facts presented in the report are undeniable and they cannot be distorted or misinterpreted.



Finland strongly condemns these heinous acts, which are clearly contrary to international law and may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. Those responsible for such horrific acts must be held accountable.

Finland stresses the need for the United Nations Security Council to respond to the JIM's findings. The permanent members of the Council have a particular responsibility for taking adequate measures, including bringing those responsible to justice. In this respect, we call on the United Nations Security Council to ensure accountability for these crimes.

The findings of the JIM report once again provide compelling evidence that the Syrian Arab Republic has failed to provide a complete declaration of its chemical weapons programme. Finland urges the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully, without any delay, with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to resolve all outstanding issues regarding the declaration.

Finland fully supports and appreciates the professional and impartial work of the JIM, the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission and the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team. It is essential that the work of the JIM is continued. The expiration of the mandate of the JIM on 17 November damages efforts to consolidate the international chemical non-proliferation regime and is of grave concern to Finland.

Despite of these appalling violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we have also seen positive development within the framework of the Convention. Finland welcomes the completion of destruction of declared chemical weapons in the Russian Federation and we congratulate the Russian Federation on achieving this major milestone. Finland participated in the commemorative ceremony at Kizner Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility and we are one of the countries that have supported the Russian Federation in completing this important treaty obligation.

The destruction of Category 2 chemical weapons from Libya has been completed. We highly appreciate the work done by the OPCW, Libya, all the contributing States and the GEKA mbH facility in Germany. Finland has participated actively in this operation by contributing to the OPCW Trust Fund for Support to Libya and by posting officers for advisory and expert positions in the maritime transport operation, which was led by Denmark.

In May this year Finland was honoured to host a visit of the Director-General of the OPCW to an event organised at the University of Helsinki to commemorate the anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Another anniversary event is scheduled for the end of the year. The Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, VERIFIN, is hosting an International Workshop on Analysis of Chemical Warfare Agents from 11 to 13 December in Helsinki. At this event the Blue Book 2017 Edition, containing Recommended Operating Procedures (ROPs) for analysis in the verification of chemical disarmament, will be published. The Blue Book has been edited by VERIFIN. Twenty-two distinguished laboratories including the OPCW Laboratory have collaborated in updating these ROPs. We want to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to each of them for this valuable work.

Finland has continued to work towards chemical safety and security globally. VERIFIN, supported financially by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, has been offering training to

experts and chemists from countries of the Global South since 1990. To date more than 1400 trainees from 138 countries have participated in various training courses. Female scientists are preferred whenever possible. We are grateful for the financial support the OPCW (International Cooperation Branch), the European Union and the United States of America (Department of State) are providing for this important capacity-building work.

We wish to emphasise a few points related to the future of the Organisation.

First, in guiding the organisation of the OPCW's future work Finland stresses the importance of continuous development of the Chemical Weapons Convention regime in a way that enables the Organisation to reflect the changing reality and quickly respond to new threats. This ability requires constant follow-up and alignment of the activities of the Organisation.

Second, it is essential to maintain a strong verification regime also in the future. Supporting the network of designated laboratories and strengthening the status of the "General Purpose Criterion" are important components of an effective verification regime and would prepare us further to meet the future challenges and developments in science and technology. In this context, we also strongly support the vital role of the Scientific Advisory Board within the Organisation and greatly appreciate its work.

Third, we underline the importance of the decision addressing the threat by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors that was adopted at the October session of the Executive Council. This decision guides the OPCW and the States Parties in our approach towards non-State actors.

Fourth, in the context of Central Nervous System-acting Chemicals Finland is a co-sponsor of the Joint Paper initiated by Australia and Switzerland. We welcome the continuation of the discussion on aerosolized CNS-acting chemicals in law enforcement, and we encourage further steps in the framework of the OPCW.

Finland wishes to welcome and support the appointment by the Conference of H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain to the position of Director-General of the OPCW. We wish him the best of success and we are looking forward to cooperating with him and contributing to the work of the OPCW under his leadership.

At this junction we also wish to congratulate and thank H.E. Mr Ahmet Üzümcü, the Director-General of the OPCW, for the successful way in which he has steered the Organisation during extremely challenging times. The Director-General has lead by example, further enhancing the level of professionalism, dedication and excellence of the OPCW. We value highly his strong leadership and contribution.

Finland remains a strong supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention regime. The OPCW can count on our political support and our expertise also in the future.

To conclude, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Conference, and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you for your attention.